

INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

Unwanted Medicines

(317) 232-8172 • (800) 988-7901

www.idem.IN.gov

100 N. Senate Ave., Indianapolis, IN 46204

Description:

- Keeping prescription and over-the-counter medicines out of the environment is an important way to prevent pollution.
- Pets and children can be poisoned from accidental ingestion of unwanted medicines thrown away in the trash.
- Proper disposal of unwanted medicines prevents illegal use or theft, including identity theft from discarded containers with patient information.

Environmental Impacts:

- Because wastewater facilities aren't designed to remove pharmaceutical chemicals, they
 could be discharged to streams and lakes in treated wastewater. These chemicals may
 remain in the environment for significant periods of time because they do not evaporate at
 normal temperatures and pressures.
- Current research is exploring the link between reproductive and developmental problems in fish and other aquatic wildlife living downstream from some wastewater treatment facilities.
- Aquatic species and habitat can be adversely affected from unwanted/unused medicines flushed down the toilet.

IDEM's Role:

- The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is responsible for protecting human health and the environment while providing for safe industrial, agricultural, commercial, and governmental operations vital to a prosperous economy.
- IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance (OPPTA) assists communities in preventing pollution and protecting Hoosiers and our environment.
- IDEM educates communities about the impacts of pharmaceuticals on the environment.
- IDEM continues to work with the United States Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) to evaluate information about potential environmental impacts.

Citizen's Role:

- The <u>U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration</u> (DEA) website has additional information about controlled substances and national Take Back Days. The DEA will be announcing new regulations and rules for unwanted medicine collections in early 2014. Please check back for updates at the beginning of the new year.
- Many local solid waste management districts help collect unwanted medicines as part of their household hazardous waste program. Ideally, if there is an unwanted medicine collection program in your local area, it is best to dispose of them through that program instead of in the trash. This assists in diverting unwanted medications from potential misuse or abuse.
- There are a number of actions every citizen can take to reduce the amount of unwanted medicines:
 - o Purchase only as much medicine as you need;
 - Centralize all medications in one location in your home to prevent the over purchasing of products you already have;

- Say "No" to samples that you won't use.
- For medicines you might use, get samples before filling a full prescription. This is to make sure you don't have a negative reaction to them and then are left with unused medicine.
- The following are guidelines for the disposal of unwanted medicines:
 - Never pour medicines down the drain or toilet.
 - Never give or sell unwanted or expired medicines to others.
 - Ask your doctor or pharmacist if they'll accept unwanted or expired medicines. Many pharmacies offer for sale postage-paid envelops which are used to mail in noncontrolled substances for disposal.
 - o Take unwanted medicines to take-back or special collections in your community.
 - Properly dispose of medicine if a collection program is not available in your community by taking the following steps:
 - 1. Dissolve tablets or capsules in the original container with a small amount of water. For liquid medications, add sawdust, kitty litter, or flour to the original container:
 - **2.** Remove labels from prescription bottles or completely mark out all patient information;
 - **3.** Put all lids back on the containers tightly and put them in a heavy-duty, sealed bag;
 - **4.** Put the sealed bag in the trash so that it is not visible to prevent unintended use or contact.

More Information:

- For more information about local household hazardous waste and medicine collection programs, visit IDEM's Recycle Indiana web site at www.recycle.IN.gov.
- For more information about the potential environmental impacts of pharmaceutical chemicals, visit U.S. EPA's Web site at http://www.epa.gov/ppcp.
- For more information about government research on the presence of chemicals in the environment, visit the U.S. Geological Survey's Web site at http://toxics.usgs.gov/regional/emc.
- IDEM collaborates with the Attorney General's Prescription Drug Abuse Task Force as part
 of the education efforts to communities on proper disposal methods. For more information,
 visit the Indiana Attorney General's Combating Drug Abuse website: http://bitterpill.IN.gov.
- For questions and concerns, feel free to call IDEM's Office of Pollution Prevention and Technical Assistance at (317) 232-8172, or toll free, at (800) 988-7901.